

The Wisdom of the Survivor

A Day-Long Conference on Tuesday, May 4, 2010

49th Floor of World Trade Center 7, overlooking Ground Zero

Center on Terrorism, John Jay College, The City University of New York

Co-Sponsored:

Hidankyo

September 11 Families' Association

Nuclear Studies Institute, American University

York College, CUNY

Hiroshima-Nagasaki Peace Committee of the Greater Capitol Area

Peace Philosophy Centre (Vancouver)

On August 6, 1945, Sadako Sasaki, a two-year old girl living a mile from ground zero, was filled with radiation from the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Ten years later, dying of leukemia, she began folding small paper cranes in response to a Japanese myth that folding a thousand such cranes grants you a wish. Hers was to live. According to her brother, Masahiro, Sadako actually folded over 1300 tiny cranes before she died. 149 of her cranes are in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, but in 2007 Masahiro Sasaki decided to give the remaining cranes in his possession to the continents of the world in the hope of spurring moves toward peace. For North America Masahiro Sasaki gave a Sadako crane to the WTC Visitor Center which was created by the September 11th Families' Association at 120 Liberty Street, across the street from the World Trade Center site. The Sadako crane is now housed in a handsome case in the museum for all visitors to experience, witness to the special relationship between the Hibakusha and the 9/11 community.

We are planning a conference that will bring over 50 Japanese and other international Hibakusha together with an equal number of surviving family members of victims of the attack on the World Trade Center to address issues of the wisdom of the survivor. Seeking to influence the debate on nuclear disarmament and abolition, many Hibakusha have made the pilgrimage to past Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences, which are held at the United Nations every five years. Now they are getting older and their chance to witness their dream of a nuclear-free world is growing shorter. Inspired by President Obama's Prague pledge to work for "a world without nuclear weapons," and knowing that the entire non-proliferation regime is hanging by a thread, they come this time with a greater sense of urgency than ever. The security of New York City, and the nation, as well

remains vital. The September 11 Families' Association and their Tribute Museum seeks allies in the Hibakusha as the tenth anniversary of the attacks approaches.

The unprecedented interaction between the Hibakusha and the 9/11 community will constitute the center of this conference. We believe that bringing together these two groups for a day of testimony and conversation will provide an understanding of the unique political, psychological, and spiritual contributions that survivors of atrocity and their families can make towards a peaceful future.

Robert Jay Lifton and Jonathan Schell will be important guests for this unusual event (and both have agreed to participate). Lifton is the author of the ground-breaking study *Death In Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*, as well more than 25 other books that have explored psychological effects of living in extreme historical situations, with particular emphasis on the nuclear age. His theoretical writings on the "survivor experience" have been extremely influential in contemporary trauma studies. Schell is best known for his passionate antinuclear books *The Fate of the Earth* and *The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons Now*. Hiroshima Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba, the co-chair of Mayors for Peace and a passionate advocate of nuclear abolition, will also be invited to play a prominent role.

The conference will also feature a panel of authors and performers who have addressed nuclear weapons-related and 9/11 issues in their work. We plan to invite for this panel E. L. Doctorow, Don DeLillo, Oliver Stone, Tim O'Brien, Ariel Dorfman, Eve Ensler, Philip Seymour Hoffman, and Jane Fonda. Our hope is that Joan Baez will perform for us in the evening in Trinity Church.

A number of other scholars who have agreed to participate will consider the conceptual, spiritual, and political issues of the survivor in relation to historical change. Charles B. Strozier, a historian and psychoanalyst and the director of the Center on Terrorism, is the author of the forthcoming "Until the Fires Stopped Burning: New York City and the World Trade Center Disaster," and will speak about his work with survivors and witnesses of 9/11. Peter Kuznick, a professor of history at American University and an authority on America in the nuclear age, will talk about Hiroshima and historical memory. Michael Flynn, a professor of psychology at York College, will address questions of artistic witness to atrocity and collective trauma.

Others, such as Joseph Cirincione, the head of Ploughshares; the well-known antinuclear activist, Dan Ellsberg; the *Boston Globe* columnist, James Carroll; Pulitzer-Prize winner Martin Sherwin; Yuki Tanaka, Research Professor at the Japan Peace Institute; and Princeton physicist and antinuclear activist Zia Mian, will be asked to reflect on human security and non-proliferation.

Two special guests we plan to invite are Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who has taken leadership on nuclear issues, is the highest ranking America official ever to have visited Hiroshima, and has shown a unique ability to understand issues of security for New York City; and Father Miguel d'Escoto, President of the United Nations General Assembly.

The conference will run from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the as yet unrented space on the 49th floor of the rebuilt World Trade Center 7, just to the north of Ground Zero. Two pictures of the space and ground zero from the window are attached to this proposal. The conference will be followed by a

reception in that space. If we secure Joan Baez, that performance will be in Trinity Church, a few blocks from WTC 7. We expect the conference to be shown on C-SPAN and to have wide coverage in New York City and the nation. We will send out streaming video of the event and post clips from it on YouTube after its completion.